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Contact: Kevin Hardy

Teacher Preparation Accountability Reports Show Excellent Overall Progress

Louisiana's third annual Teacher Preparation Accountability Reports were released today, and the overall numbers reflect progress in the state's campaign to improve the quality and quantity of classroom teachers trained in its colleges of education at public and private colleges and universities statewide. Of the nineteen programs evaluated, twelve were ranked as "Exemplary" (the highest possible ranking), and four were ranked "High-Performing." As was the case last year, there were no programs rated as "Low- Performing."

"The accountability reports represent a critical component of the education community's effort to improve Louisiana's teacher education programs at both public and private universities," said Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie. "This year, the overwhelming majority of our programs received admirably high rankings. That means that our institutions have stepped up to the challenge of program accountability. And the real winners in all of this, of course, are the children in our schools."

In compliance with the Higher Education Act of 1998, Louisiana created a Teacher Preparation Accountability System to assess the performance of teacher preparation programs within the state. The accountability system, an important measure of the success of the state's overall education reform efforts, is intended to demonstrate to the public that Louisiana's recently-redesigned teacher preparation programs are delivering results and that its public and private colleges of education are working diligently to produce high-quality, effective classroom teachers.

The report also showed that overall program completers increased from 2,174 statewide to 2,300, which means more badly-needed teachers are available for the classroom. While regular program completers rose slightly, the bulk of the gain in new teachers came through the institutions' alternate-certification programs, which provide an expedited path for degreed, non-education majors who desire to teach to receive training and certification for the classroom.

"Our completer numbers are coming back strong after dipping slightly immediately following redesign," said Dr. Jeanne Burns, Board of Regents Associate Commissioner of Academic Affairs for Teacher Education Initiatives. "But what is even better news is that our passage rates on PRAXIS,

Louisiana's teacher certification examination, are now at 99%, whereas they were at 89%

(More)

Accountability Reports

ADD ONE

before redesign. That means that new teachers are better prepared to be effective from their first day in the classroom. ” Burns also noted that there has been an increase of completers in critical shortage areas, particularly in sciences like chemistry and physics.

“Louisiana’s teacher training programs are to be commended for this excellent overall performance,” said Superintendent of Education Cecil J. Picard. “The fact is that, not only do we need *more* teachers, particularly in critical shortage areas like math, science and special education, but we need those teachers to be highly qualified. Today’s reports are very encouraging on both counts.”

The high marks for Louisiana’s teacher education programs are attributable to a variety of system-wide and institution-specific quality improvement efforts undertaken under Louisiana’s overall education reform initiative. The University of Louisiana System, for example, which produces most of the state’s education graduates, launched an initiative last year to raise the test score required for entry into education programs. To increase the quantity of qualified educators, colleges of education are increasing their recruitment efforts, especially for students in the critical shortage areas of math, science and special education. They also are developing tutoring programs to help students meet the new Praxis score requirement and post-graduation mentoring programs to help graduates adjust to their new roles.

Also, intensive teacher education quality-improvement efforts at Southern University’s Baton Rouge campus have been so successful that the university was selected as a case study by the Education Trust in Washington, D.C., for presentation at its Fourteenth Education Trust National Conference last November. In addition, LSU - Baton Rouge credits a significant portion of its increase in certifiable completers to its concerted effort to promote its teacher preparation program among liberal arts majors.

During the first phase of the accountability system (2001-2002), only the performance of regular and alternate-certification students on the PRAXIS test was assessed. The following year (2002-2003) the formula was expanded to make the accountability scores an even more meaningful catalyst for continued reform. Scores are now calculated using a weighted formula that takes into account not only the PRAXIS examination passage rate, but also each institution’s regular and alternate certification completer rate (with extra points for completers who meet definitions for identified shortage areas) and the score on a survey measuring completer satisfaction.

Individual institution reports may be viewed on the Board of Regents web site (www.regents.state.la.us) beginning tomorrow morning (April 10). Click on “What’s New at the Board of Regents.”

